

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 COME-00 EB-07
LAB-04 SIL-01 SS-15 NSC-05 SY-05 /059 W
----- 099053 /61

O R 222225Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2966
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUICGALPA
USCINCSO
USIA WASHDC
MARSCTYGDBN, WASHDC

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PANAMA FOR RMO

USIA FOR ILA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: NS, ELAB, PGOV, PORS, MILI, CASC
SUBJECT: EAGLE INTERNATIONAL FACTORY LOCK-IN

1. SUMMARY - ONE HUNDRED PERSONS, INCLUDING US CITIZEN MANAGER, WERE LOCKED IN A US-OWNED FACTORY HERE FOR 24 HOURS. THEY WERE ABLE TO LEAVE THE FACTORY TUESDAY AT NOON (DEC. 21) AFTER HIGH-LEVEL EMBASSY REPRESENTATIONS AND ON-THE-SPOT PRESENCE OF EMBASSY OFFICIAL (DEFENSE ATTACHE). NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES RESUMED AND ARE CONTINUING AFTER HOSTAGES FREED, AND EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE MET WITH GOES OFFICIALS AND PRESS TO ENSURE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT
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REALLY OCCURRED, ESPECIALLY TO CORRECT PRESS ACCOUNT THAT MARINES WERE SENT OUT TO THE FACTORY TO RESCUE HOSTAGES.
END SUMMARY.

2. FOR A 24 HOUR PERIOD, STARTING IN THE P.M. OF DEC. 20, 1976, ABOUT 100 PERSONS WERE LOCKED INTO THE EAGLE INTERNATIONAL

FACTORY (A BRANCH OF ZWICKER KNITTING MILLS OF WISCONSIN) IN SAN SALVADOR BY ANGRY UNION MEMBERS, WHO TOOK THEIR ACTION AFTER MANAGEMENT REFUSAL TO REHIRE FOUR FEMALE WORKERS FIRED ON DECEMBER 3 FOR ILLEGALLY DISSEMINATING UNION PROPAGANDA AND RECRUITING MEMBERS ON PLANT PREMISES DURING WORKING HOURS. THE HOSTAGES WERE COMPRISED OF 80 WORKERS, AND 20 SUPERVISORS, RALPH NAGREEN, US CITIZEN, THE PLANT MANAGER, AMONG THEM. THE EMBASSY WAS NOTIFIED BY NAGREEN'S LAWYER OF HIS PLIGHT AT ABOUT 9 P.M. THAT NIGHT, SPECIFICALLY TO HELP GET MINISTER OF DEFENSE TO ORDER NATIONAL POLICE TO THE SCENE. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE DURING THE NIGHT TO GET ANY ONE OF HIGH ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE PROBLEM.

3. EARLY IN THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 21 AMBASSADOR MET WITH THE MINISTERS OF LABOR AND DEFENSE, AND EMBASSY OFFICERS MET WITH MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS TO REVIEW THE SITUATION AND FIND OUT WHAT PROCEDURES WERE BEING PURSUED TO RESOLVE CONFLICT. MINDEF STATED TO AMBASSADOR THEY WERE READY FOR ANY NECESSARY ACTION, BUT STRONGLY FELT NOT APPROPRIATE TO COMMIT NATIONAL POLICE OR GUARD AT THIS TIME. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED HIS FULL CONCURRENCE. MINLABOR SAID SITUATION COULD BE RESOLVED AND GROUP FREED FROM FACTORY IF NAGREEN WOULD AGREE TO TALKS WITH UNION LEADERS AND SHOW A CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF LABOR TOLD EMBASSY OFFICIALS THAT THIS "ILLEGAL" LOCK-IN CAME ABOUT AFTER A NUMBER OF MINOR LABOR INFRACTIONS BY THE COMPANY AND AT LEAST FOUR MEETINGS SPECIFICALLY ON THE DISMISSALS. BEST MEANS OF SOLUTION BE INSISTED WOULD BE AGREEMENT TO UNDERTAKE NEGOTIATIONS AGAIN, ESPECIALLY SINCE LABOR JUDGES ALREADY ON HOLIDAYS. HE SHOWED THE EMBASSY OFFICIALS A TELEGRAM HE WAS SENDING TO THE PLANT MANAGER WHICH ORDERED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIM, "UNDER PENALTY OF LAW" TO MEET AT THE MINISTRY WITH UNION LEADERS AT 1130 A.M. SAME MORNING.

4. WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S PERMISSION DEFENSE ATTACHE COL. RODRIGUEZ WENT TO THE PLANT TO OBSERVE THE SITUATION. WHILE THERE HE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION AND CONVINCED UNION LEADERS AT THE PLANT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY CONTINUING TO KEEP HUNGRY PEOPLE LOCKED INSIDE. NAGREEN HAD INDICATED TO RODRIGUEZ WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH UNION NEGOTIATORS BUT THAT HE WOULD NOT LEAVE THE PLANT UNLESS ALL EMPLOYEES WERE LET OUT AT SAME TIME. WITH COL. RODRIGUEZ HELP, THE HOSTAGES WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE SHORTLY BEFORE NOON ON DEC. 21. SOON AFTERWARDS NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN AT THE MINISTRY OF LABOR BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT AND ARE CONTINUING TODAY.

5. MORNING NEWSPAPER DIARIO DE HOY OF DECEMBER 22 STATED THAT U.S. MARINES HAD BEEN SENT TO THE SITE BY THE EMBASSY AND

WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR FREEING FACTORY HOSTAGES. EMBASSY
OFFICIALS HAVE MET WITH GOES OFFICIALS AND PRESS TO SET
STORY STRAIGHT. GOES IS ISSUING PRESS RELEASE DENYING ANY
MARINE TROOPS ARE IN EL SALVADOR, WHILE COL. RODRIGUEZ AND
AMBASSADOR CLARIFIED EVENTS TO DIARIO DE HOY.
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